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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

4 September 1951

SUBJECT: TERMS OF REFERENCE: NIE-45: LIKELIHOOD, CHARACTER,  
AND CONSEQUENCES OF A SOVIET ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE  
A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS  
(for consideration of the IAC Representatives)

THE PROBLEM

To assess (a) whether the USSR is likely to make a tactical shift in its policies and seek a temporary "relaxation of tensions"; (b) how far the USSR might go in this direction; and (c) the probable impact of such a policy on the free world.

DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

We consider that the Kremlin, looking at the world situation, is confronted with three basic policy choices; (a) to seek early general war before the West becomes too strong; (b) to continue its present aggressive and expansionist policy; or (c) to seek a "relaxation of tensions" designed to lull the West into a sense of false security and to undermine growing Western strength and consolidation. Accepting NIE-25's conclusion that the USSR probably does not want early general war, two broad courses of political warfare remain open to the Kremlin. Course (b), a continued aggressive, expansionist policy, has been examined in NIE-25 and, with regard to particular areas,

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in various other estimates, although it has not yet been given systematic over-all treatment. However, we believe that first priority should be given to examining whether or not the Kremlin might feel compelled to make a temporary tactical shift in its present policy as an even more effective means of achieving its strategic objectives. This third alternative might involve merely avoiding any further risky local aggression, while perhaps intensifying such propaganda efforts as the peace offensive; on the other hand it might go so far as to include ostensible or actual concessions.

We recognize that any such shift would be only temporary, and that the USSR would move cautiously and tentatively in any new direction, constantly probing for weak spots, and proceeding from step to step only as results might seem to justify. We recognize, moreover, that the USSR would by no means abandon all of its aggressive and subversive tactics; that it might adopt a more conciliatory policy only in Western Europe, for example, while continuing to expand in Asia. However, we do believe that it is feasible to define a clearcut possible course of action called a "relaxation of tensions." Finally, we recognize that considerations of timing are important. It may be that the USSR will eventually feel compelled to adopt a new and more conciliatory policy, but that the Kremlin does not yet believe that it has to face this choice. It may be that the Kremlin, while considering such a shift in tactics, simply has not made up its mind.

#### QUESTIONS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

I. WHAT FACTORS MIGHT LEAD THE KREMLIN TO SEEK A BROAD RELAXATION OF TENSIONS?

A. Are there any historical and doctrinal precedents for a deliberate policy of relaxation of tensions?

What elements of Soviet doctrine indicate that

temporary relaxation is a part of Soviet thinking? Ebb and flow? Lenin's "one step backward for two steps forward?" How much do the Communists think of the eventual triumph of Communism in terms perhaps of decades rather than the next few years, thus permitting them to accept a temporary shift in policy?

B. What factors in the Kremlin's view of the world situation might lead to a shift in Soviet policy?

1. To what extent because of growing Western strength and consolidation might the Kremlin feel that its cold war opportunities were steadily narrowing? To what extent might the USSR consider that its postwar expansionist policy had reached the point of diminishing returns and was generating ever more powerful counterpressures?
2. Therefore, might the Kremlin consider that if it is to achieve its primary objective of undermining the West it must sooner or later choose between a temporary relaxation of its pressures or early global war. In other words might the USSR now feel increasingly compelled to shift its course and seek another means of undermining the West? Is the USSR yet at the point where it must seriously consider such a shift?

C. What tactical objectives might the USSR consider it could achieve through a relaxation of tensions?

1. Drive a wedge between the US and its Allies by emphasizing US aggressiveness and exploiting issues with divisive possibilities between the US and Western Europe in particular, such as East-West trade?
2. Create a false sense of security and thus undermine the impetus behind Western consolidation and rearmament?
3. Prevent, delay, or hamper German and Japanese rearmament and their association with the West?
4. Secure the propaganda advantages of actually appearing as a peacemaker while labeling the US an aggressor?

D. On the other hand, what factors militate against an early change in the USSR's present policies?

1. To what extent does the Kremlin feel committed to a continued hostile, aggressive policy? Does it probably see sufficient further opportunities for exploitation to

justify continuation if its present cold war pressures.

2. What opportunities might the Kremlin feel would be denied to it if it sought a temporary relaxation of tensions? Might the Kremlin consider that it is not yet forced to choose between war and temporary relaxation, and that NATO and prospective German and Japanese rearmament can be forestalled or at least delayed by other means?

II. WHAT INDICATIONS ARE THERE OF A POSSIBLE SOVIET ATTEMPT TO REDUCE WORLD TENSIONS?

- A. What recent Soviet moves and developments might indicate that such an effort is in the offing?
- B. To what extent might the recurrent "peace" offensive be a laying of the propaganda basis for such a campaign?

III. HOW FAR MIGHT THE KREMLIN GO IN IMPLEMENTING SUCH A "RELAXATION" POLICY?

Within the broad context of a relaxation of tensions policy, there is a wide range of implementing actions

which the USSR might undertake. At a minimum it might merely close out the Korean war and refrain from further overt aggressive action, while greatly stepping up its "peace" offensive and other propaganda campaigns. On the other hand the Kremlin might realize that for its new policy to have any real impact it must make a whole series of ostensibly conciliatory moves. Finally, the USSR might even consider that in order to achieve certain specific objectives, particularly re Germany and Japan, it would have to make major concessions to the West.

- A. How far might the Kremlin expect to get without any real concessions? What propaganda and other methods might it adopt?
- B. What concessions, such as an Austrian peace treaty or East-West trade concessions, might the Kremlin feel it could make without really weakening its position? How much might the Kremlin expect to gain through such means?
- C. What far-reaching concessions really involving a loss to the Soviet Union might the Kremlin feel were required to achieve specific objectives, and perhaps to insure the success of its over-all "relaxation" policy? To what extent might the Kremlin feel able to make such concessions?

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1. Re Germany - neutralization
2. Re Japan
3. Re disarmament, atomic energy control, etc.
4. Re general broad issues such as somewhat lowering the Iron Curtain, modifying international Communist activities, etc.

17. WHAT WOULD BE THE PROBABLE IMPACT OF A RELAXATION OF TENSIONS IN THE FREE WORLD?

- A. What might be the impact of a policy not involving major concessions? What would be the possibilities of driving a wedge between the Western countries? To what extent might the USSR lull the West into a false sense of security and thus undermine the impetus behind Western rearmament?
  1. On Western Europe and the NATO alliance?
  2. On the rest of the free world?
- B. What might be the impact of the free world of a broader program involving real concessions?

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